

Motion Debate on

“Enacting legislation to combat false information on the Internet”

Progress Report

Purpose

At the sitting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) of 21 July 2021, the motion on “Enacting legislation to combat false information on the Internet” moved by the Hon Elizabeth QUAT and amended by the Hon KWOK Wai-keung was passed (full text of the passed motion at **Annex**). This report sets out the follow-up actions taken by the Administration in respect of the motion.

Actions Taken

2. The Government is reviewing or reviving existing legislation to ensure that, on the mission of comprehensively safeguarding national security, relevant laws are available to the enforcement authorities for action and strict enforcement, so as to bring offenders to account. The Film Censorship (Amendment) Bill 2021 already scrutinised by the LegCo is one of the examples. Other issues which need to be addressed include combating fake news and safeguarding cyber security. The Chief Secretary for Administration will co-ordinate the relevant work. The Secretary for Home Affairs will seriously examine the experience and the practices of other countries and places in handling fake news and false information to provide reference for the next step of work. The Hong Kong SAR Government will report to the Legislative Council once progress of the fake news study has been made.

Home Affairs Bureau

October 2021

Hon Elizabeth QUAT's motion on

“Enacting legislation to combat false information on the Internet”

Motion as amended by Hon KWOK Wai-keung

That, given the widespread popularity of online social platforms and instant messaging software, rapid information flow may cause significant impacts; the prevalence of false information (including fake news) on the Internet not only misleads members of the public, but even brings about severe adverse impacts on the safety, stability and

development of the international community; false information on the Internet has already become an issue of concern of the international community which warrants serious and immediate action; during the occurrence of the ‘black-clad violence’ incidents in Hong Kong in 2019, some individuals or organizations used voluminous false information on the Internet to incite public hatred against the Police, advocate violence and create social dissension in an endeavour to confront the Central Government and SAR Government; during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, there has been lots of false information spreading maliciously on the Internet with an intent to hinder anti-epidemic work; in July this year, some people being suspectedly ‘self-radicalized’ under the influence of false information on the Internet hurled inflammable objects at the Government House and attacked police officers with sharpened objects, and some other people subsequently took advantage of these cases to disseminate false information to incite hatred and advocate terrorist activities; many countries have enacted legislation to combat false information, for example, the United States enacted the Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act in 2016, Germany enacted the Network Enforcement Act in 2017, France enacted the

Law Against the Manipulation of Information and the Law Against False Information in 2018, Singapore enacted the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act in 2019 and so on, various sectors of the community therefore consider that the Government must learn a lesson from the proliferation of false information during the ‘black-clad violence’ in 2019 and, by making reference to overseas experience, formulate effective measures suitable for Hong Kong to address false information; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to expeditiously:

- (1) enact legislation to combat acts of spreading false information on the Internet;
- (2) subsidize academic institutions to conduct studies on using big data platforms to collect information and data from mainstream social media in Hong Kong and applying artificial intelligence technologies to assist in the screening of false information;
- (3) strengthen ‘media literacy’ education to enhance the competence of members of the public in identifying false information; and
- (4) establish a database for fact-checking to assist the public in verifying the authenticity of information.